



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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### **Thirty-Six Cases of Whooping Cough Identified in North Dakota** *Department of Health Issues Advisory to Health-Care Providers*

BISMARCK, N.D. – An additional 30 cases of whooping cough (pertussis) have been identified in McLean, McHenry and Ward counties, bringing to 36 the total identified since June 22, 2004, according to State Epidemiologist Larry Shireley. As a result, the North Dakota Department of Health today issued a Health Advisory to health-care providers concerning treating, testing and vaccinating for the disease.

Of the 36 cases, 12 individuals are younger than 18, and 24 are 18 and older. One infant age 2 months is hospitalized. In addition, the Department of Health is investigating other possible cases that have not yet been diagnosed.

Today's Health Advisory includes the following recommendations:

- Health-care providers should consider testing for whooping cough (pertussis) when evaluating patients who have prolonged coughs.
- An accelerated vaccination schedule should be implemented in McLean, McHenry and Ward counties.
  - Infants should receive the pertussis vaccine at 6, 10 and 14 weeks of age, rather than the regularly scheduled 2, 4 and 6 months of age.
  - Children who are at least 4 years old and who have not received their fifth dose of the vaccine should be vaccinated.
- Health-care providers in other areas of the state also may consider implementing this accelerated vaccination schedule.
- Parents should check their children's immunization records and then contact their usual vaccine provider.
- People who have whooping cough and those who are in contact with them should be treated with antibiotics.

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Whooping cough is a contagious disease that lasts for many weeks and causes severe coughing with a “whooping” sound or coughing that leads to vomiting. The disease can be life threatening for infants and can cause moderate to severe illness in adults. Older children and adults may have only a persistent cough that can last for six to 10 weeks.

“Whooping cough can cause severe illness in infants and older adults who have existing respiratory disease,” Shireley said. “One person who has whooping cough can pass the disease to many other people. Pregnant women and new mothers especially need to be cautioned that they could spread the disease to their newborn infants who have no immunity.”

Adults, teens and vaccinated children who become infected with whooping cough often have mild symptoms that resemble bronchitis or asthma; as a result, the Department of Health is recommending that health-care providers consider whooping cough when evaluating any patient who has an illness with one or more of the following symptoms:

- Prolonged cough (lasting for a week or more)
- Long spells of coughing with spasms
- Coughing with a whooping sound
- Coughing that leads to gagging/vomiting

“Because there is no vaccine for adolescents and adults, these groups often can transmit the disease to others,” Shireley said. “We recommend that anyone who has had a cough for more than a week should contact their physician to see if they might have whooping cough.”

For more information, call the North Dakota Department of Health Division of Disease Control at 800.472.2180 or 701.328.2378. The Health Advisory issued today can be downloaded at [www.ndhan.gov/health](http://www.ndhan.gov/health).

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